



# the Spire



**Newsletter of the  
Oak Tree-Iselin  
Presbyterian Church**

**February 2026**

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*the Spire* is published for distribution electronically the first day of the month and sent by post the next business day. The deadline for submitted articles is the previous Wednesday.

We welcome any news you would like to share with the congregation. Please e-mail your WORD documents to:

Betsy Christensen, editor,  
at [Betson42@comcast.net](mailto:Betson42@comcast.net) or leave written articles in the mail box marked "*the Spire*".

*Minds, hearts, hands, and voices in Christ.*



In the 56 years I have been a member of the church at 1295 Oak Tree Road, I don't remember ever having to close Church for Sunday worship on two consecutive weeks in January. We are grateful for the technology, however, to have been able to pre-record the service and provide it on the website for those who are able to access it there. We are grateful also for the expertise of our office staff (Margarita), worship leaders, (Herb, Sue), and Church musician (Alaine) who have the gift to put it all together.

We have met many challenges in the last two years. Our Worship and Music chair, Sue, has found willing pastors and CREs and Elders to fill the pulpit every week. We have not missed communion the first of every month. We have had to deal with homeless people on the premises, snow removal, plumbing problems, electrical problems, delays with the new sign...and yet we still support two schools, four other churches, various groups that meet in both buildings. Our bills get paid. Our food pantry is as busy as ever.

And all without a Pastor to guide us.

For God has been with us every step of the way. He has not abandoned us. He loves His church and its faithful people. He meets us where we are in our uncertainty and doubt and encourages us through our trials. Trust in Him. As we go through this Lenten Season, let us focus on our own hearts and seek a better understanding of how He would have us be.

## **Announcement**

**The Lenten Soup and Bread Suppers sponsored by the Worship and Music Committee will not be held this Lenten Season. You are encouraged to invite friends to your home on Wednesday nights for devotions.**



# Welcome

to  
Oak Tree- Iselin  
Presbyterian Church



Children's Sunday School begins in the sanctuary at 10:30 and is excused to their classroom after the Time with the Children

Join us  
for Sunday morning  
worship  
at 10:30 am  
in the Sanctuary, and for  
Fellowship following the  
service.

We can also be found on  
Facebook Live.

**PER CAPITA  
APPORTIONMENT  
FOR 2026  
HAS BEEN RAISED TO  
\$42 PER MEMBER**

YOUR FAIR SHARE IS DIVIDED  
PROPORTIONATELY BETWEEN  
THE PRESBYTERY OF THE  
COASTLANDS, THE  
NORTHEAST SYNOD, AND  
PC(USA)

## Session actions of January 12<sup>th</sup>

Motion to approve the Christian Education Sunday School curriculum from January 11<sup>th</sup> through March 22, 2026

Motion to approve the recommended salary increases for Margarita Estrada, Fred Blessman, and Rev. Chang Lee.

Motion to approve the 2026 Sunday Communion dates as follows: January 4<sup>th</sup>, February 1<sup>st</sup>, March 1<sup>st</sup>, April 5<sup>th</sup>, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, June 7<sup>th</sup>, July 5<sup>th</sup>, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, September 6<sup>th</sup>, October 4<sup>th</sup>, November 1<sup>st</sup>, and December 6<sup>th</sup>.

Motion to approve the installation of two (2) electric hand dryers to be placed in the main floor bathrooms, cost not to exceed \$3,000.

## Mission focus



**February 8<sup>th</sup>  
During Fellowship Hour**

Enjoy a bowl of homemade soup here or bring a container to take some home.

Your donation will help support food pantry efforts in Woodbridge Township, including our own.

You can also help by bringing a can of soup for our food pantry!

# Liturgy for February



## February 1<sup>st</sup>

Micah 6:1-8  
Psalm 15  
1 Corinthians 1:18-31  
Matthew 5:1-12

## February 8<sup>th</sup>

Isaiah 58:1-9a (9b-12)  
Psalm 12:1-9 (10)  
1 Corinthians 2:1-12 (13-16)  
Matthew 5:13-20



## February 15<sup>th</sup>

### Transfiguration of our Lord

Exodus 24:12-18  
Psalm 2 or Psalm 99  
2 Peter 1:16-21  
Matthew 12:1-9



## February 22<sup>nd</sup>

### First Sunday in Lent

Genesis 2:15-17  
Psalm 32  
Romans 5:12-19  
Matthew 4:1-11



Come, join fellow worshippers from the Avenel, Community and Woodbridge churches to commemorate

## ASH WEDNESDAY

First Day of Lent



On February 18, 2026  
At 7:00 pm

At the  
Community Church  
75 Glenville Ave,  
Edison 08817

## Mnemonic

Thirty days has September,  
April, June, and November.  
Unless a leap year is its fate,  
February has twenty-eight.  
All the rest have three days more,  
Excepting January,  
Which has six thousand,  
One hundred and eighty-four.

Brian Bilston

# Happy February Birthday



Heather Meyers	2/2
Christopher Bolton	2/7
Daniel Reeves	2/8
Bill Anthony	2/20
Cassandra Hansen	2/20
Yvonne Raghunandan	2/27

 **Johnsonburg**  
Camp & Retreat Center

## Men's Retreat

Friday, February 27, 2026 -  
Sunday, March 1, 2026

**Theme: The Constitution and  
the Bible**

Led by George Erlandson, Pastor  
Community Presbyterian Church of  
Edison

Register at [www.campjburg.org](http://www.campjburg.org)  
Registration closes  
Monday, February 16



## Ronald McDonald House

We are again collecting aluminum soda can tabs for the Ronald McDonald House Mission effort of the Avenel Presbyterian Church. Together, let's make a difference! You will find a collection canister in Fellowship Hall.

## Shop-Rite Gift Cards



are available each week during Fellowship Hour in \$25, \$50, and \$100 denominations.

Oak Tree-Iselin Presbyterian Church receives 5% back on each card sold.

## Ministry of Compassion

A receptacle has been placed in the foyer for donations to the food pantry. Items needed are:

**Canned: vegetables, beans, fruit, tuna fish, pasta sauce, soups and broth. Mac'n'Cheese, Cereal, Peanut Butter, Jelly, Pasta, Rice**

**Also accepted: feminine products and personal hygiene products.**



February distribution is on Monday, February 9th



## Prayer Shawl Ministry

Thursday Nights  
at 7:00 PM  
In the  
Choir Room

Come and learn to knit or crochet (we'll supply yarn and needles) or just come for the conversation!

## Coastlandspresbytery.org





Thank you  
Laura and  
Jeff,  
for providing  
our beautiful  
Christmas  
Tree!



...and to all those who came to help  
prepare our church for the Advent  
and Christmas Seasons.



Serving Underserved Families in New Jersey



On Tuesday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, Ron and Betsy delivered our baby shower gifts to *Moms Helping Moms* in Warren. We also donated \$400!



### Prayer and Fire

A tale is told about a small town that had historically been "dry," but then a local businessman decided to build a tavern.

A group of Christians from a local church were concerned and planned an all-night prayer meeting to ask God to intervene.

It just so happened that shortly thereafter lightning struck the bar and it burned to the ground.

The owner of the bar sued the church, claiming that the prayers of the congregation were responsible, but the church hired a lawyer to argue in court that they were not responsible.

The presiding judge, after his initial review of the case, stated that "no matter how this case comes out, one thing is clear. The tavern owner believes in prayer and the Christians do not."

Received from Doc's Daily Chuckle.



Dear friends of Oak Tree-Iselin Presbyterian Church,

I went on this road trip with a clear purpose. I love my dog Moonie and want to show the world how much love and joy a pet can bring. So, I decided to dedicate my miles and time to the organization that gave me Moonie, Animal Lighthouse Rescue. I prayed on this decision, and the message from God was clear. People want to connect, support and donate when they can. We had so much fun visiting old friends across the country and spending time with my husband's family in California. I'm proud to say we raised over \$3,000 for Animal Lighthouse Rescue. One third of that donation came from the wonderful members of Oak Tree, of CLEF, and the biggest thanks of all goes to fellow *sato* mom Betsy who, with the Mission Committee, organized *A Little Fall Fun* and kept *the Spire* full of vacation pics from our drive. Did you know you can still donate to the campaign? Check out the good work at [www.alcares.com](http://www.alcares.com) and as for me, now that we're back, we are fostering dogs for adoption. Thank you all and God bless.

Andrea

**The Feast**

**Before the Fast**

**Shrove Tuesday**

**Pancake  
Supper**

**February 17<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm  
In Fellowship Hall**



### **British Shrove Tuesday Pancakes**

Traditional British Shrove Tuesday Pancakes are more like a French crepe than the thick Fluffy American pancakes

#### **Ingredients**

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup all purpose flour (plus 2 tbsp if using cups)

$\frac{1}{8}$  tsp salt

1 egg beaten, room temperature

8 oz whole milk, room temperature

1 Tbsp Grand Marnier liqueur or your favorite liqueur, or water

2 Tbsp butter or more as needed (for the pan)

$\frac{1}{2}$  lemon fresh, organic (to serve)

2 Tbsp sugar (to serve)

#### **Instructions**

Sift the flour and salt into a large bowl; make a well in the middle and add the beaten egg.

Stir in half the milk, working in the flour gradually until it begins to form a batter, then beat well and add the rest of the milk and liqueur or water.

Pour batter into a jug and let stand for about 15 minutes before making any pancakes, if you have time. When batter has rested, heat a nonstick pan over medium high heat, add a little bit of butter to the center of the pan, stir the batter then pour in a small amount into the pan then swirl it so that it spreads thinly.

Cook for about one minute, then turn and cook the other side for about 30 seconds.

Place on a plate, drizzle with juice from a fresh lemon, sprinkle with sugar then roll or fold to eat immediately, or else keep the pancakes on a plate over simmering water to keep warm, then add the lemon juice and sugar.

Continue adding a tiny bit of butter to the pan and repeat the instructions to cook the remaining batter.

Although far less widely known than [Fat Tuesday/Mardi Gras](#), the Tuesday immediately before [Ash Wednesday](#) is also known as Shrove Tuesday. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of [Lent](#), which is sometimes referred to as "Shrovetide" in England. Observance of Shrove Tuesday can be traced back to at least AD 1000 and was originally observed as a day of confession and [penitence](#) in preparation for Ash Wednesday and Lent. Today, Shrove Tuesday is primarily observed among Catholics, Episcopalians, Lutherans, and Methodists. The word *shrove* is the past tense of *shrive*, a verb meaning "to go to confession and get absolved of sin."

In the past few centuries, though, Shrove Tuesday has turned into more of a day of feasting in preparation for the fasting that is to occur during Lent. The feasting aspect of Shrove Tuesday originated due to the need to get rid of the foods/ingredients that are restricted during the Lenten fasting, such as sugar, leavened flour, eggs, etc. The need to use up these ingredients has resulted in Shrove Tuesday also becoming known as Pancake Tuesday, or, more simply, Pancake Day.

What does the Bible say about Shrove Tuesday? Should Christians observe Shrove Tuesday? Considering the Bible does not even mention Ash Wednesday or the 40 days of Lent, Shrove Tuesday is not a biblical observance, either. There is certainly nothing wrong with Christians eating pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, or any other Tuesday for that matter. Should a Christian feel led of the Lord to observe Lent in some fashion, there would be nothing wrong with observing a feast the day before the 40 days of Lent. What must be understood, however, is that Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday, Lent, etc., are not observances God requires of Christians. Observance of these days is entirely a matter of personal conviction. From the Internet